DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 479 875 JC 030 480

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TITLE	Viewing Peer-Reviewed Literature about the Community College: Portrayal of a Sector in Higher Education Journals.
PUB DATE	2001-00-00
NOTE	43p.
PUB TYPE	Reports - Research (143)
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Community Colleges; Faculty; Journal Articles; *Scholarly Journals; Scholarly Writing; Two Year Colleges

ABSTRACT

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Viewing Peer-Reviewed Literature about the Community College: Portrayal of a Sector in Higher Education Journals

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Abstract

To determine how community colleges are portrayed in academic journals, three core higher education journals and three community college journals were examined during the publication years 1990-2000. Information was sought about authorship, institutional affiliation, topics, research methods, and scope of empirical articles. Results indicated that while the two sets of journals varied in their portrayal, there were also some similarities. Readers of community college journals would receive a fuller, more detailed portrait of the community college than would readers of general higher education journals, but both set of journals conveyed an incomplete picture of the community college's complexity, including its multiple missions.

Viewing Peer-Reviewed Literature about the Community College: Portrayal of a Sector in Higher Education Journals

Academic journals "both create and mirror" a field (Silverman, 1987). They serve as vehicles for disseminating new knowledge that influences ideas, attitudes, and behaviors (Hood, 1994). Their contents influence thinking in a field by including some topics and methods and excluding others. In so doing, journals act as gatekeepers (Glenn, 1976), standing as a record of topical areas of concern and prevalent issues at a given point in time. Having one's work published in a journal also privileges the voices of those who are published by providing an outlet for their words. Many write, but only some are published.

Though somewhat scarce, systematic reviews of the contents of academic journals are sometimes conducted to enrich understanding about the emergence and/or progression of new knowledge, dominant methodologies, and authorial dominance in particular fields or disciplines. For example, Cooper (1998) reported on systematic reviews of American Psychological Association (APA) journals and indicated a possible bias toward quantitative studies where statistically significant results were found and where the null hypothesis was rejected. Hall, Ward, and Comer (1988) voiced the same possibility in their review of 128 educational research articles published in the mid-1980s. Moreover, they found that results that conflicted with prevailing beliefs were more likely to be rejected by journal reviewers and less likely to find their way into print. In other words, journals in the field of education appeared to be systematically excluding qualitative studies and limiting the advancement of new knowledge if it were contrary to the dominant paradigms.

There are three major academic journals in the field of higher education: *Journal of Higher Education* edited by Leonard Baird at Ohio State University, *Research in Higher Education* edited by John Smart at the University of Memphis, and *Review of Higher Education* edited by Philip Altbach at Boston College. Each journal focuses upon the entire field of higher education by publishing articles written by scholars examining higher education issues from a variety of disciplinary perspectives. Collectively these three journals have a major influence on what topics, research questions, methodologies, and authors are perceived as important in the field of higher education.

For the time period 1975-1981, Silverman (1987) analyzed the contents of eight "core" (p. 43) journals focusing on higher education. Among the eight journals were *Journal of Higher Education*, *Research in Higher Education*, and *Review of Higher Education*. As one dimension of the research, Silverman examined over 1,100 articles for their topic and found that literature about students and student affairs was the most frequently published, followed by works on teaching and learning. He also noted "the relative silences of the core literature" (p. 45) about certain topics, including the community college. More specifically, he noted that while certain areas or topics "have their own journals, lack of attention to specific areas in the core literature suggests that non-specialists are not becoming aware of certain aspects of higher education" (p. 45). Additionally, "the failure to treat certain topics might also influence the quality of knowledge" (p. 45) in a particular area.

As a part of the larger field of higher education, research focusing on community colleges may appear in *Journal of Higher Education*, *Research in Higher Education*, and *Review of Higher Education* but is more likely to appear in journals that focus exclusively

on two-year colleges. Of the national journals focusing on community colleges, three stand out because they primarily publish research-based articles, use a peer-review process, and have a long-standing commitment to publishing research or a growing national readership interested in research. These journals are the *Community College Review*, edited by George Vaughan at North Carolina State University; *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*, edited by D. Barry Lumsden at the University of North Texas; and *Journal of Applied Research in the Community College*, edited by Mary Kinnick at Portland State University.

In an extensive review of literature about the community college, including journal articles, Safarik and Getskow (1996) found that about 20 journals published articles by and for community college professionals. Additionally over 200 books were dedicated to community college topics and approximately 15,000 items related to community colleges had been added to the ERIC database since the late 1960s. Of these many publications, Safarik and Getskow concluded that few offered peer-reviewed outlets for individuals wanting to make empirical or theoretical contributions to the field. The authors also concluded that "the topics university professors write about [often in refereed journals]...are the topics that filter into the other publication formats, suggestive of their influence on other author groups" (p. 78).

The influence of peer-reviewed journal articles on a field's knowledge base is irrefutable. Without question, the contents of peer-reviewed journals affect the visibility of an area or subfield within a broader field or discipline. If an area is not addressed in the core journals of a field or discipline, journals readers may not have a comprehensive understanding of an area or may consider it unimportant because of its omission.

Community colleges are an important sector within higher education, if for no other reason than size. Over 50% of first-time college students enter higher education through the community college. More than 1,100 institutions are public two-year colleges that enroll over 5,000,000 students annually. Additionally, community colleges have opened up higher education to a more diverse student body than found in the four-year sector and have made higher education accessible to students with limited financial resources and weak academic backgrounds. For those seeking information about this important sector, higher education academic journals serve as one source of information. For those seeking to learn what topics are important in the study of community colleges and what are appropriate ways to research these topics, higher education academic journals are vital.

The purpose of this study was to examine the contents of several peer-reviewed higher education journals during the time period 1990-2000 so as to ascertain coverage of peer-reviewed research on the community college. To determine this coverage, we sought to answer the following questions about each journal: (1) Who is published in the journal? (2) What are the general topics of the published articles? (3) What are the research methods used in the empirical articles? and (4) What is the scope of the empirical articles? By answering these questions, we hoped to answer the broader questions of what knowledge about the community college sector is conveyed (and omitted) and by whom in two types of academic journals: core higher education journals and community college journals.

Data Sources and Method

The contents of six national journals during 1990-2000 were examined in this study. The journals were grouped into two sets: one set of three journals that focus on the entire field of higher education and one set of three journals that focus specifically on two-year colleges, especially community colleges. The first set of journals will be referred to as general higher education journals and includes the *Journal of Higher Education*, *Research in Higher Education*, and *Review of Higher Education*. The set of journals that focuses on two-year colleges will be referred to as the community college journals and includes *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*, *Community College Review*, and *Journal of Applied Research in the Community College*.

While some of these six journals publish book and essay reviews, only journal articles were included in this study since they require a peer review process not typically undergone for book and essay reviews. The journal articles were selected as follows. Articles in the general higher education journals were included if the article's title included the words "community college(s)," "junior college(s)," or "two-year college(s)." All the articles in the community college journals were included with the exceptions noted above and with the exception of ERIC Reviews in *Community College Review*.

Each article selected to be included in the study was examined for the following information: (1) author's sex (female, male); (2) author's institutional affiliation (2-year college, 4-year college or university, other such as a state agency or professional organization); (3) general topic; and (4) type of article (empirical study, reflective essay, literature review). For the empirical articles, the method (qualitative, quantitative, mixed, historical) and scope (single-institution; a few institutions; statewide; regional; or national) were also ascertained. To gain a more in-depth look at the quantitative studies,

the researchers also determined the dominant method of statistical analyses used in empirical studies in the community college journals for the publication years 1998-2000 and in all the relevant empirical studies in the general higher education journals for 1990-2000.

If the sex of the author could not be determined by the author's first name or by the researchers' knowledge of the author, it was coded as "unknown." If an institution's name did not clearly indicate whether it was a two-year or four-year college, its classification was checked in the Carnegie Foundation's *A Classification of Institutions of Higher Education* (1994).

The categories used to classify article topics were those used by Cohen, Palmer, and Zwemer in their work, *Key Resources on Community Colleges* (1986). To classify important resources on community colleges, Cohen, Palmer, and Zwemer used the following categories: (1) General Resources on Two-Year Colleges; (2) Students; (3) Faculty; (4) Governance, Administration, and Planning; (5) Financing and Budgeting; (6) Instruction, Instructional Support, and Student Services; (7) Occupational Education; (8) Remedial and Developmental Education; (9) Continuing Education and Community Services; (10) the Collegiate Function; and (11) Educational Opportunity and Social Mobility. See the Appendix for a description of each category.

A limitation of Cohen, Palmer, and Zwemer's classification system is that it is time-bound. While conceived only 15 years ago, it makes no reference to such current topics as multiculturalism, diversity, service learning, institutional effectiveness, learning organizations, sexual harassment, the Internet, and the web. Some of these topics fit within the categories used by Cohen, Palmer, and Zwemer, e.g., service learning fit

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within the category of Instruction, Instructional Support, and Student Services, but not all did. As a consequence, an additional category of Miscellaneous was created for those articles that did not seem to fit into any of the other 11 categories.

To categorize articles by general topic and well as by type, the researchers initially coded each article on the basis of article title and abstract. If an abstract was not available, the article was skimmed to determine its topic and type. If the article was classified as an empirical study, its scope and research method were also determined, either through reading the abstract or skimming the article.

The topic of each article was classified by two people. For articles where the classification was not immediately clear or where there was disagreement, the categorization was discussed until agreement was reached. A general rule in classifying an article whose title suggested or indicated two topics was to classify the article by the first topic mentioned in the title. For example, Absher and Crawford's (1996) article entitled "Marketing the Community College Starts with Understanding Student Perspectives" was classified as Financing and Budgeting rather than Students.

One limitation of this study is that it may have undercounted articles about the community college in the general higher education journals. Articles in these journals were included only if their title contained the words "community college(s)," "junior college(s)," or "two-year college(s)." However, a reading of all the actual articles in each journal could reveal that community colleges were the focus of some of these articles. For example, in *Research in Higher Education* during 1990-2000 only ten articles contained the words "two-year college(s)" or "community college(s)." A skimming of all the journal's articles during this time period revealed that five more articles were about some

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aspect of the community college or included students from one or more community colleges as part of their data base. For example, in Bach, Banks, Kinnick, Ricks, Stoering, and Walleri's (2000) article "Student Attendance Patterns and Performance in an Urban Postsecondary Environment," the researchers examined the transfer patterns of students among three community colleges and one university. However, this study was not included in our study because its title did not contain the words "community college(s)," "junior college(s)," or "two-year college(s)." By relying solely on article titles to indicate coverage of the community college, we may have missed studies that examine the role of the community college as part of the larger educational system.

Findings

For each set of journals, a description of the journals is provided, followed by the collective findings for the set. Tables 1 through 5 present most of the statistics referenced below.

Collective Findings for General Higher Education Journals

The Journals: Published since 1930 by the Ohio University Press, the *Journal of Higher Education* (JHE) is the oldest and largest of the general higher education journals. As of September 2000, JHE had 3,440 subscriptions (United States Postal Service, 2001). Its average manuscript acceptance rate during 1990-2000 varied from 12 to 14% (Len Baird, Editor, personal correspondence, January 30, 2002). Each of JHE's 11 volumes published during 1990-2000 consisted of six issues, for a total of 66 issues containing 304 articles. Only eight articles (03%) fit the parameters of this study.

Research in Higher Education has been published since 1973 and is the bimonthly journal of the Association of Institutional Research (AIR). AIR is composed of

institutional researchers and planners; student personnel specialists; administrators in two- and four-year colleges, universities, and state- and national-level offices; and university professors. As of January 2002, RHE had about 1,500 subscribers, of whom between 300-400 belong to AIR. Its acceptance rate during 1990-2000 was consistently between 10 and 15 percent (John Smart, Editor, personal communication, January 22, 2002). Each of RHE's 11 volumes published during 1990-2000 consisted of six issues, for a total of 66 issues that collectively contained 396 articles. Of these, only ten (02%) fit the description of a relevant article for this study.

Review of Higher Education (RevHE) has been published since 1978 and is the journal of the Association for the Study of Higher Education (ASHE). ASHE is composed of university professors, graduate students, and other individuals interested in higher education as a field of study. Like *Research in Higher Education*, RevHE is not associated with a particular university and is currently published by Johns Hopkins Press. Its readership included 1,579 subscribers as of November 2001 (Publications Committee Report, 2001) and its acceptance rate was approximately 17% during 1990-2000 (Phil Altbach, Editor, personal correspondence, January 22, 2002). Among the 44 journal issues published in the 11 volumes for the years 1990-2000, only seven (03%) of the 223 articles fit the parameters of this study.

Findings: Of the 923 articles published in these three higher education journals during the publication years 1990-2000, only 25 (03%) had the words "community college(s)," "junior college(s)," or "two-year college(s)" in their title. Of these 25, only one was not an empirical study but rather a literature review. The majority of the 43 authors were men (72%) at universities (70)%. Authors from the two-year sector were

usually co-authors with university members rather than single authors. Three general topics received the most coverage: Students (6 articles or 24%); Governance, Administration, and Planning (5 articles or 20%); and Educational Opportunity and Social Mobility (4 articles or 16%).

Quantitative methods dominated the 24 empirical studies: over 70% were quantitative and 25% were qualitative. Among the 17 quantitative studies published during the 11 years of this study, two (12%) used descriptive statistics. Over 40% used advanced statistical techniques such as hierarchical linear modeling and structural equation modeling. During the publication years 1998-2000, only of the journals, *Journal of Higher Education,* published any studies about the community college. This study used hierarchical linear modeling. Qualitative studies were most apt to appear in *Review of Higher Education*. Seventy-two percent of its relevant articles were qualitative, whereas *Journal of Higher Education* published only one, and *Research in Higher Education* published none.

There was almost an equal number of national (10) and single-institution (9) studies. Because the *Review of Higher Education* published several qualitative case studies of individual community colleges, the majority (72%) of its studies were single-institution ones, whereas the *Journal of Higher Education* only published national studies. The studies in *Research in Higher Education* ranged from single-institution (40%) to statewide (20%) to regional (10%) to national (30%). Except for one article published in the *Review of Higher Education*, all the studies focused on U.S. community colleges.

Collective Findings for Community College Journals

Journals: *Community College Journal of Research and Practice* (CCJRP) has been published since 1976 by Taylor & Francis and is "the only two-year college journal that is international in scope and purpose" (CCJRP Aims and Scope, 2001). Its subscribers, which currently number 480, include higher education faculty members and researchers, community college administrators and faculty, and libraries. Its acceptance rate during 1990-2000 averaged 50% (Barry Lumsden, Editor, personal correspondence, January 22, 2002). Over the period of 1990-2000, CCJRP was published bimonthly for each year for a total of 66 issues. These issues contained 461 articles, of which 312 were empirical and 149 were essays, ERIC Reviews, or other contributions.

Community College Review (CCR) has been published since 1973 and is located at North Carolina State University. It currently has over 1,100 subscribers (*Community College Review: A Reading Community*, 2001) and its acceptance rate averaged 33% during 1992-2000. Information about the acceptance rates for 1990 and 1991is not available (Ashley Byram, CCR Managing Editor, personal correspondence, January 22 and 24, 2002). During 1990-2000, CCR was published quarterly each year for a total of 45 issues. In these 45 issues were 234 articles and 33 ERIC Reviews. Among the 234 articles were 165 empirical studies and 69 non-empirical articles. The non-empirical articles were literature reviews or authorial perspectives on the topic, usually from a practitioner's perspective.

Journal of Applied Research in Community Colleges (JARCC) has been published since 1994 by New Forums Press and is a semi-annual journal sponsored by the National Council for Research and Planning (NCRP), an affiliated council of the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC). The journal seeks to serve the needs and

interests of institutional researchers and planners in the community college as well as those of administrators, faculty, policy makers and others with an interest in the community college. JARCC currently has over 800 subscribers and its acceptance rate averaged 60 to 70% during the years of its publication. Between 1994 and 2000 seven volumes were published, representing 13 issues and 88 articles. Three-fourths of the articles were empirical studies while the remaining fourth consisted of essays, descriptions of assessment or planning approaches or tools, descriptions of local efforts related to accountability and institutional effectiveness, a literature review, and a meta-analysis.

Findings: Of the 783 articles published in the three community college journals during 1990-2000, 543 (69%) were empirical studies. Almost 60% (754) of the 1283 authors were male. The majority (53%) of the authors were at four-year college or universities, as compared to 42% of the authors being at community colleges or community-college related organizations.

The three general topics receiving the most coverage were Students (19%); Governance, Administration, and Planning (18%); and Instruction, Instructional Support, and Student Services (14%). No striking topic patterns emerged among the community college journals except for articles about students being most apt to appear in the *Journal of Applied Research in the Community College*. Also, this journal did not cover continuing education and community service, unlike the other two community college journals.

As with the general higher education journals, quantitative methods dominated the empirical studies. Sixty percent (324) used quantitative methods, 20% (110) were

qualitative in design, 11% (58) used mixed methods, and 9% (51) were historical studies. Among the quantitative studies published during 1998-2000, 49% used descriptive statistics only and another 14% used chi-squares or t-tests. Other than ANOVA, which was used in 14% of these studies and multiple regression/OLS regression, which was used in 10%, almost no articles used the more powerful or advanced statistical procedures such as structural equation modeling or hierarchical linear modeling (2%). None used structural equation modeling. All the community college journals published qualitative studies, but the *Community College Review* published the most (20%) and the *Journal of Applied Research in the Community College* the least (13%). When studies used a mixed method design, typically the researchers used dominant-less dominant designs, where one method—the dominant one—provided a wealth of data and the less-dominant method was used to elaborate or explicate results obtained through the dominant design (Creswell, 1994). The percentage using historical methods largely stemmed from CCJRP's featured articles about the historical development of community college education in each state.

Twenty-five percent (138) of the 543 empirical studies were statewide in scope, and 38% (206) were single-institution studies. Only 17% (90) were national in scope. The single-institution and statewide studies tended to be in states where large community college systems exist, e.g., California, Florida, Illinois, New York, North Carolina, and Texas. A few studies examined community colleges outside the United States, usually in Canada.

Collective Findings Across All Journals

When the data are viewed collectively, several findings emerge. First of all, certain commonalities existed across all six journals. Male authors dominated (59%), as did authors from four-year colleges and universities (54% as compared to 41% at community colleges). However, these averages mask the range of percentages of male and community college authors. Only one female voice spoke about community colleges in the *Journal of Higher Education*, while almost 50% of the authors in *Journal of Applied Research in Community Colleges* were female. Additionally, only eight percent of the authors in the *Journal of Higher Education* and *Review of Higher Education* were from community colleges as compared to 66% in the *Journal of Applied Research in Community Colleges*.

Across the six journals, certain broad topics were the most frequent: Students (19% or 157 of the 808 articles); and Governance, Administration, and Planning (18% or 147 articles). The coverage of students and student services is consistent with Silverman's (1987) finding that literature about students and student affairs was the most frequently published in higher education journals. However, both sets of journals had some common limitations in their portrayal of the community college. Most of the studies involving students focused on traditional-age college students to examine patterns of persistence and transfer even though adult students, defined as 23 or older, constituted almost 60% of community college enrollment in 1997 (Phillippe, 2000). Some other general topics received almost no coverage in any of the journals: Continuing Education and Community Service; Financing and Budgeting; and Remediation and Developmental Education.

Quantitative methods dominated the empirical studies in both sets of journals, with 60% of the empirical studies being quantitative. Use of newer, more powerful statistical procedures was evident in these studies in the general higher education journals during the 11 years covered by the study. There was limited evidence of their use in the community college journals during the publication years 1998-2000.

The propensity of journals to publish studies using certain methodologies was obvious. Among the six journals, *Research in Higher Education* was the most likely to publish quantitative studies, the *Review of Higher Education* the most likely to publish qualitative studies, and *Community College Journal of Research and Practice* the most likely to publish historical studies and studies using mixed methods. None of the general higher education journals published studies using mixed methods whereas all the community college journals did.

It is also clear that distinctively different patterns exist *between* the two sets of journals. Regarding authorship, as might be expected, individuals from the two-year sector were more likely to be authors or co-authors of articles in community college journals (42%) than in general higher education journals (28%). When authors from the two-year sector did appear in the general higher education journals, it was usually as co-authors rather than as single-authors. Women authors were also more apt to be found in community college journals (38% versus 23% in the general higher education journals).

Whatever the gender and institutional affiliation of the published authors, there were clear patterns in their choice of topics. None of the three general higher education journals contained articles about Instruction, Instructional Support, & Student Services although this was one of the top three topics in the community college journals. In the

general higher education journals Educational Opportunity and Social Mobility was one of the top three topic areas, while this topic received almost no coverage in the community college journals. Readers of the general higher education journals could learn about institutional management in terms of community college organizational culture and effectiveness, but learn almost nothing about two key players in the culture-faculty and administrators--and nothing about daily operations. Readers of community college journals would gain a broader, more detailed view of institutional governance and management, through studies of community college presidents as well as some dimensions of planning and budgeting. Community college faculty as a group were also examined in these journals, as well as some teaching issues, thus reinforcing the image of the community college as a teaching institution.

There were also journal differences regarding the scope of empirical studies. While single-institution studies dominated (38% or 215 articles), followed by state-level studies (almost 25% or 138 articles), one journal, the *Journal of Higher Education*, only published national studies. Among all the journals, less than 20% of the empirical articles had a national focus. Community college journals were much more apt to publish empirical statewide studies (25%) and less apt to publish national studies (17%) than were the general higher education journals (12% statewide studies and 42% national studies). When the general higher education journals published single-institution studies, 44% were qualitative studies (44%). All the community college journals published empirical studies of two-year colleges outside the United States, whereas only one of the general higher education journals did.

Discussion and Implications

These findings have implications for individuals concerned with the portrayal of the community college sector in academic journals and the quality of the journal literature focusing on community colleges, as well as for individuals seeking journal outlets for their research on the community college.

Readers of the general higher education journals would learn little about the community college as a unique sector because very little is published about it in these journals. Indeed, this study's most obvious finding is the limited attention community colleges receive in core general higher education journals. The reasons for this are unclear. Is it because those who write about the community college do not send their manuscripts to these journals for fear of rejection since these journals have much lower manuscript acceptance rates than do the community college journals? Or perhaps authors writing about the community college prefer to send their work to community college journals, where interest in the community college is a given and where the work will reach those people who definitely want to learn about the community college.

If studies about the community college are submitted to general higher education journals, are they rejected for failure to meet these journals' standards? Are these standards different from than those of the community college journals? Perhaps editors of the general higher education journals encourage and accept articles that contribute to theory development and revision, whereas editors of community college journals encourage and accept articles that are more practitioner and policy-oriented. Certainly, more practitioners published in the community college journals than in the general higher education journals. Or might an article be rejected, not because of its orientation or ability to meet the journal's standards, but because general higher education journal editors and

reviewers deemed it of insufficient interest to readers since it was on the community college? None of these questions can be answered by this study but need answering if we are to understand the lack of attention to community colleges in general higher education journals.

In those articles that do appear in these journals, the focus is primarily on community college students, especially factors affecting their retention or attrition. Students are also studied in terms of the community college's role in facilitating educational opportunity and more specifically its transfer or collegiate function. The other community college missions such as career education, community education, and remedial/developmental education receive little to no coverage in these journals. This finding confirms Silverman's (1987) thesis that core journals' "lack of attention to specific areas ... [means] that non-specialists are not becoming aware of certain aspects of higher education" (p. 45).

Why studies about the other missions of community colleges have not appeared in the general higher education journals is not known. Perhaps the editors of these education journals do not receive any manuscripts dealing with other missions of the community college. Or if they do, editors and reviewers may view studies on the transfer function to be a more likely topic of interest to journal readers since this function clearly links community colleges to higher education whereas the other missions are more linked to postsecondary education. Whatever the reasons for their omission, studies on remedial/ developmental education, continuing education, and career education need to be published within the general higher education journals if their readers are to understand

that these institutions are more than junior colleges preparing students for transfer to the four-year sector.

Readers of general higher education could also occasionally learn about the institutional management of community colleges in terms of their organizational culture and effectiveness, but learn almost nothing about two key players in the culture-faculty and administrators--and nothing about daily operations. By not being exposed to information about their counterparts in the two-year sector, some four-year college and university faculty and administrators may believe they have little in common and fail to see the universality of some issues regardless of sector, e.g., certain working conditions in academe, teaching-learning issues. Lack of information about these topics and others can also contribute to the continued arrogance and elitism of many in the four-year sector, who look down upon community college students and faculty and are reluctant to admit transfer students.

As might be expected, readers of journals focusing specifically upon the community college receive a much fuller, more detailed portrait of the institutions. Like the general higher education journals, a lot of attention is paid to the transfer mission but career education also receives attention. However, the lack of attention to remediation and developmental education is striking, given the attention in the national press during the 1990s and the efforts of several states to shift remedial/developmental education almost entirely to community colleges (Shaw, 2000). Also, little attention is paid to continuing or community education even though non-credit education is estimated by the American Association of Community Colleges to enroll over 5,000,000 students a year (Phillippe, 2000). Why the missions of community education and remedial/education are

not presented in the community college journals is unclear. As was asked about the general higher education journals, are articles about these missions being refused because they are considered of little interest to readers? Or are articles regarding these missions and kinds of students not being submitted on these topics? If so, why? Alternatively, perhaps studies on these topics are of poor quality and not worthy of acceptance, even though editors know the topics need coverage.

Although readers of community college journals gain a more detailed and comprehensive view of the institution than do readers of the general higher education journals, unfortunately, far fewer people read the community college journals than the general higher education journals, if readership is measured by number of subscribers. If one assumes no overlap in subscribers of the two journal sets, then the total number of subscribers to the general higher education journals is almost 6,500 people compared to less than 2,500 subscribers to the three community college journals. Even with probable overlap in subscribers among the general higher education or the community college journals, the general higher education journals have far more subscribers than do the community college journals. Thus a portrayal of the community college sector in the general higher education journals would be viewed by far more people than the view presented in the community college journals.

As regards the quality of published research on community college, questions can be raised about the limited generalizability of many of the studies. Almost 40% of the empirical studies in the six journals were single-institution studies. Of these, only 8% were qualitative studies, which, by definition, would likely be single-institution studies. Single-institution studies may be occurring in such great numbers, particularly in the

community college journals, because community college institutional researchers are able to turn a work-related institutional study into something publishable. Other single-institution studies may also be the result of dissertation studies conducted by community college faculty members or staff, who are students in higher education programs and pragmatically choose to study a problem within their own institution. While the upside of single-institution quantitative studies is that they can suggest to those at other institutions ways to research the same or a similar issue at their own college, the downside of such work is its limited generalizability as already mentioned.

Another aspect of generalizability involves which states' community colleges are studied. For those whose only source of information about community colleges is academic journals, the community college would seem to exist only in a few states, like California, Florida, Illinois, North Carolina, and Texas, since these are the states appearing in the limited journal literature on community colleges. The emphasis on certain states probably reflects their extensive community college systems. These same states may also have universities with graduate programs focusing on higher education or more specifically on community colleges. For example, North Carolina State University has a well-known community college leadership program, and North Carolina is one of the states whose community colleges are frequently the site of studies published in the community college journals.

What is lost or blurred by focusing on just some states' community colleges is an understanding of the tremendous diversity of these institutions. Their role and consequent mission emphasis within a state's higher education system varies depending upon the state's view of their place within the educational system. In some states they are still

governed as part of K-12 education, while in others they are governed as a separate sector and in others treated as part of higher education. Their student bodies, program offerings, selectivity within certain programs, internal governance issues, and many other factors vary greatly depending upon institutional size, geographical location, and curricular emphasis. For example, students attending the small, rural Piedmont (Virginia) Community College, located in Charlottesville near the University of Virginia, are on average very different demographically than those attending one of the community colleges in New York City or Chicago and choose from very different program offerings. People who generalize about community colleges from the perspective of the one or two they are familiar with in their region or state have an incomplete and inaccurate picture of community colleges and the variety of roles they play in a given community or state. Journal editors can play a role in broadening readers' perspective by encouraging submission of studies about community colleges in states not typically featured in studies.

Another dimension of quality in quantitative studies can be the type of statistical analysis conducted. The difference in power and newness of statistical procedures between the two sets of journals was striking. It appears that the research questions in quantitative studies published in general higher education journals required a higher level of analysis than did the questions asked in studies in community college journals. Perhaps that is because the questions themselves were more complex, moving beyond the obvious or descriptive concerns found in some of the studies in the community college journals.

For those seeking to publish refereed journal articles about the community college, their best bet is to submit their articles to one of the three community college journals since their focus is on community colleges only. However, should individuals

wish to publish in a general higher education journal, the patterns found in this study suggest that quantitative single-institution studies may best be submitted to *Research of Higher Education*, qualitative case studies to *The Review of Higher Education*, and quantitative national studies to *Journal of Higher Education*. Those seeking to publish quantitative studies in general higher education journals need to be asking research questions that utilize powerful statistical procedures for their analysis.

Regardless of where researchers choose to submit their studies, both quantitative and qualitative researchers need to rise to the challenge of asking complex questions, particularly about topics currently addressed or addressed far too superficially. All researchers should strive to move beyond the limited, descriptive snapshots too frequently found in published studies and seek to portray this unique sector in all its complexity.

Table 1. Institutional Affiliation of Journal Authors

Affiliation	Journal								
	JHE	RHE	RevHE	GHE total	CCJRP	CCR	JARCC	CC total	All total
2-year	1	11	0	12	281	167	86	534	546
	(08%)	(58%)	(08%)	(28%)	(37%)	(44%)	(66%)	(42%)	(41%)
4-year	11	8	11	30	444	192	43	679	709
	(84%)	(42%)	(100%)	(70%)	(58%)	(51%)	(33%)	(53%)	(54%)
Other	1	0	0	1	39	19	2	60	61
	(08%)	(00%)	(08%)	(02%)	(5%)	(5%)	(01%)	(05%)	(05%)
Total	13	19	11	43	764	378	131	1,273	1,316

Notes: (1) Percentages have been rounded and should be read downward.
(2) Some authors are counted more than once because they wrote more than one article in a journal during 1990-2000. Thus

Table 2. Gender of Journal Authors

Gender	Journal								
	JHE	RHE	RevHE	GHE total	CCJRP	CCR	JARCC	CC total	All total
Female	1	5	4	10	292	131	67	490	500
	(08%)	(26%)	(36%)	(23%)	(38%)	(35%)	(47%)	(38%)	(38%)
Male	11	13	7	31	457	227	70	754	785
	(84%)	(69%)	(64%)	(72%)	(60%)	(60%)	(49%)	(59%)	(59%)
Unknown Gender	1	1	0	2	14	20	5	39	41
	(08%)	(05%)	(00%)	(05%)	(02%)	(05%)	(04%)	(03%)	(03%)
Total authors	13	19	11	43	763	378	142	1283	1326

Note: Percentages have been rounded and should be read downward.

Table 3. Methods Used in Empirical Articles

Method	Journal								
	JHE	RHE	Rev HE	GHE total	CCJRP	CCR	JARCC	CC total	All total
Qualitative	1	0	5	6	64	37	9	110	116
	(14%)	(00%)	(72%)	(25%)	(20%)	(22%)	(13%)	(20%)	(20%)
Quantitative	5	10	2	17	159	111	54	324	341
	(72%)	(100%)	(28%)	(71%)	(51%)	(67%)	(82%)	(60%)	(60%)
Historical	1	0	0	1	46	5	0	51	52
	(14%)	(00%)	(00%)	(4%)	(15%)	(03%)	(00%)	(09%)	(09%)
Mixed Methods	0	0	0	0	43	12	3	58	58
	(00%)	(00%)	(00%)	(00%)	(14%)	(07%)	(05%)	(11%)	(10%)
Total Empirical Articles	7	10	7	24	312	165	66	543	567

Note: Percentages have been rounded and should be read downwards.

Table 4. Community College Topics Addressed in All Journal Articles

Topic	Journal								
	JHE	RHE	RevHE	GHE total	CCJRP	CCR	JARCC	CC total	All total
General resources	1	0	0	1	65	9	1	75	76
	(12%)	(00%)	(00%)	(04%)	(14%)	(04%)	(01%)	(10%)	(09%)
Students	1	4	1	6	77	49	25	151	157
	(12%)	(40%)	(14%)	(24%)	(17%)	(21%)	(28%)	(19%)	(19%)
Faculty	1	0	2	3	49	32	5	86	89
	(12%)	(00%)	(29%)	(12%)	(11%)	(14%)	(06%)	(11%)	(11%)
Governance, administration & planning	1	2	2	5	79	44	19	142	147
	(12%)	(20%)	(29%)	(20%)	(17%)	(19%)	(21%)	(18%)	(18%)
Financing & budgeting	0	0	0	0	21	7	5	33	33
	(00%)	(00%)	(00%)	(00%)	(05%)	(03%)	(06%)	(04%)	(04%)

(table continues)

Table 4 (continued)

Topic	Journal								
	JHE	RHE	RevHE	GHE total	CCJRP	CCR	JARCC	CC total	All total
Instruction, instructional support & student services	0 (00%)	1 (10%)	0 (0%)	1 (04%)	76 (16%)	27 (11%)	9 (10%)	112 (14%)	113 (14%)
Occupational education	0 (00%)	1 (10%)	0 (00%)	1 (04%)	34 (07%)	6 (03%)	3 (04%)	43 (05%)	44 (05%)
Remediation, developmental education	0 (00%)	0 (00%)	0 (00%)	0 (00%)	10 (02%)	4 (02%)	4 (04%)	18 (02%)	18 (02%)
Continuing education & community service	0 (00%)	0 (00%)	0 (00%)	0 (00%)	5 (01%)	13 (06%)	0 (00%)	18 (02%)	18 (02%)

(table continues)

Table 4 (continued)

Topic	Journal								
	JHE	RHE	RevHE	GHE total	CCJRP	CCR	JARCC	CC total	All total
Collegiate function	1 (12%)	1 (10%)	1 (14%)	3 (12%)	22 (05%)	24 (10%)	7 (08%)	53 (07%)	56 (07%)
Educational opportunity & social mobility	2 (25%)	1 (10%)	1 (14%)	4 (16%)	1 (00%)	7 (03%)	2 (02%)	10 (01%)	14 (02%)
Miscellaneous	1 (12%)	0 (00%)	0 (00%)	1 (04%)	22 (05%)	12 (05%)	8 (10%)	42 (05%)	43 (05%)
Total articles	8	10	7	25	461	234	88	783	808

Note: Percentages have been rounded and should be read downward.

Table 5. Scope of Empirical Articles

Scope	Journal								
	JHE	RHE	RevHE	GHE total	CCJRP	CCR	JARCC	CC total	All total
Single institution	0 (00%)	4 (40%)	5 (71%)	9 (38%)	106 (34%)	58* (35%)	42 (64%)	206 (38%)	215 (38%)
2-19 community colleges	0 (00%)	0 (00%)	1 (14%)	1 (04%)	27 (09%)	26 (16%)	6 (09%)	61 (11%)	62 (11%)
Statewide	1 (14%)	2 (20%)	0 (00%)	3 (12%)	96 (31%)	34 (21%)	8 (12%)	138 (25%)	141 (25%)
Regional	0 (00%)	1 (10%)	0 (00%)	1 (04%)	15 (05%)	4 (02%)	1 (05%)	20 (04%)	21 (04%)
National	6 (86%)	3 (30%)	1 (14%)	10 (42%)	48 (15%)	35 (21%)	7 (12%)	90 (17%)	100 (18%)
Not stated in empirical article	0 (00%)	0 (00%)	0 (00%)	0 (00%)	15 (05%)	2 (01%)	0 (00%)	17 (03%)	17 (03%)

(table continues)

Table 5 (continued)

Scope	Journal								
	JHE	RHE	RevHE	GHE total	CCJRP	CCR	JARCC	CC total	All total
Outside USA	0 (00%)	0 (00%)	(00%)	0 (00%)	5 (02%)	6 (04%)	0 (00%)	11 (02%)	11 (02%)
Total Articles	7	10	7	24	312	165	66	543	567

*Includes one article focusing on 1 community college and 1 university.

Note: Percentages have been rounded and should be read downward.

Table 6. Types of Statistical Analysis Used in Community College Journals during Publication Years 1998-2000

Type of Analysis	Journal			
	CCJRP	CCR	JARCC	Total
Descriptive only	33	10	12	55
	(53%)	(30%)	(63%)	(49%)
Chi square	5	5	4	14
	(08%)	(17%)	(21%)	(13%)
t-tests	0	1	0	1
	(00%)	(03%)	(00%)	(01%)
ANOVA	12	3	1	16
	(19%)	(10%)	(05%)	(14%)
MANOVA	4	2	0	6
	(06%)	(07%)	(00%)	(05%)
MANCOVA	1	0	1	2
	(02%)	(00%)	(05%)	(02%)

(table continues)

Table 6 (continued)

Type of Analysis	Journal			
	CCJRP	CCR	JARCC	Total
Correlation	1	0	0	1
	(02%)	(00%)	(00%)	(01%)
Multiple regression/OLS	4	6	1	11
regression	(06%)	(20%)	(05%)	(10%)
Hierarchical linear modeling	0	2	0	2
	(00%)	(07%)	(00%)	(02%)
Other	2	1	0	3
	(03%)	(03%)	(00%)	(03%)
TOTAL	62	30	19	111

Note: Percentages have been rounded and should be read downward.

Table 7. Types of Statistical Analysis Used in General Higher Education Journals during Publication Years 1990-2000

Type of Analysis	Journal			
	JHE	RHE	REVHE	Total
Descriptive only	1	1	0	2
	(20%)	(10%)	(00%)	(12%)
ANOVA	0	1	0	1
	(00%)	(10%)	(00%)	(06%)
MANCOVA	0	2	0	2
	(00%)	(20%)	(00%)	(12%)
Discriminant analysis	0	1	0	1
	(00%)	(10%)	(00%)	(06%)
Correlation	0	0	1	1
	(00%)	(00%)	(50%)	(06%)

(table continues)

Table 7 (continued)

Type of Analysis	Journal			
	JHE	RHE	REVHE	Total
Multiple regression/OLS	3	0	0	3
regression	(60%)	(00%)	(00%)	(18%)
Logistic regression	0	2	0	2
	(00%)	(20%)	(00%)	(12%)
Path analysis	0	0	1	1
	(00%)	(00%)	(50%)	(06%)
Structural equation modeling	0	2	0	2
	(00%)	(20%)	(00%)	(12%)
Hierarchical linear modeling	1	1	0	2
	(20%)	(10%)	(00%)	(12%)
TOTAL	5	10	2	17

Note: Percentages have been rounded and should be read downward.

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Appendix 1

Categories Used to Classify Article Topics

General Resources:

- "the broad scope of two-year college education and administration. . .
- textbooks and studies that provide a comprehensive picture of the two-year college, .
- works discussing the community college mission"(p. 11).

Note: For this study, histories of how two-year colleges developed in particular states and countries outside the U.S. were included, as were articles about global perceptions of the community college and visions of community colleges as learning communities.

Students:

- "student characteristics and abilities; . . .
- outcomes and achievement, . . .
- enrollment trends and influences; . . .
- minorities and economically disadvantaged; . . .
- and the special needs of non-traditional students" (p. 41).
- "'reverse transfer' phenomenon" (p. 45).

Note: Additions for this study included student performance and retention studies.

Faculty:

- "faculty characteristics; . . . as professionals;
- faculty relations with college;
- part-time faculty" (p. 102).

Governance, Administration, and Planning:

- "administrators and leadership [includes dept. chairs and others, including women and minorities—see p. 158]; . . .
- boards of trustees; . . .
- governance and administrative organization; . . .
- state role in administration and governance; . . .
- institutional research and planning" (p. 157).

Note: Additions for this study included institutional/organizational effectiveness.

Financing and Budgeting:

- "funding and fiscal management; . . .

- retrenchment, fund raising and institutional development; . . .
- tuition and student financial aid" (p. 221) and
- "institutional marketing; . . . public relations" (p. 223).

Instruction, Instructional Support, and Student Services:

- "curriculum planning and development; . . .
- instructional practices, innovations and media; . . .
- student personnel and support services; . . . .
- libraries and learning resource centers [including personnel—see p.254]" (p.250).

Occupational Education:

- "developing two-year college role in occupational education; . . .
- program and curriculum development; . . .
- program evaluation and outcomes; . . .
- and miscellaneous writings on occupational education" (p. 322).

Note: Additions for this study included Tech Prep and career education.

Remedial and Developmental Education:

- "general works on remedial education . . .
- works on individual aspects of the remedial education function" (p. 363).

Continuing Education and Community Services:

- "continuing and adult education
- community services and community development" (p. 382)
- "the characteristics of community service students
- marketing surveys to assess community . . . contracted educational services for business and industry" (p.384).

The Collegiate Function:

- "liberal arts in the community college
- transfer to and articulation with 4-year institutions
- general education" (p. 409).

Educational Opportunity and Social Mobility:

- "community college role in promoting educational mobility
- the community college role in promoting social mobility" (p. 449)
- "educational access," "equal educational opportunity,"
- "'cooling out function'" (p. 450),

- "tracking" (p. 451).

***Miscellaneous** (see examples below)

- women in community colleges.
- research at the community college.
- analysis of publications in CJCQRP
- graduate study of community colleges
- dual credit courses
- marketing the community college image
- the National Junior College Athletic Association

* New category added by authors

Source: Adapted from Cohen, Palmer, and Zwemer's *Key Resources on Community Colleges* (1986)

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